



SPELLBOUND

The last time we saw Eddie Redmayne, he was wearing lipstick and a frock for his transgender role in *The Danish Girl*. But today he wields one of cinema's most powerful weapons – a wizarding wand from the brilliant mind of J. K. Rowling. Words Gill Pringle

If it was the children who took on evil in the Harry Potter franchise, then *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* sees four adults wrangle the baddies, be they fellow wizards or beasts.

Led by Redmayne's Newt Scamander – an author and 'magizoologist' whose textbooks featured on the Hogwarts' curriculum – Team Newt features Dan Folger's Jacob Kowalski and sisters Tina and Queenie Goldstein, played by Katherine Waterston and Alison Sudol.

Set in 1920s New York, *Fantastic Beasts* serves as Rowling's screenwriting debut with directing duties handled by longtime Potter director, David Yates.

But unlike Potter, *Fantastic Beasts* is not based on a novel, and thus its storyline was shrouded in secrecy.

"We weren't allowed to print out scripts, and when we did print out pages, they had to be put in a safe at night. I accidentally walked off set one day with my pages and it was almost like a police escort, returning to set," says Redmayne, who first met with Yates in London a year prior to shooting. "It was around Christmas on a cold, wintry day, and we were in a club in Soho, sitting by a fire, and I didn't know anything about what this project was, and he just gently started teasing out the story. This was before the



script was fully finished, so I literally sat by the fire as he told me the story of *Fantastic Beasts*, and it was the most wonderful way to hear it. Every few months I would go back for another meeting, and he would entice me with a bit more of the story."

Matt Smith and Nicholas Hoult were rumored early on to play Newt, although when *STACK* is joined by Yates, he says, "Eddie landed very early on, because we love him, and he's got such soul."

"And then we sort of built the world around Eddie. We said, 'Alright, we've got Eddie, now let's bring in all these other actors to work with Eddie'. We were in New York, and flew all these other actors in just to read with him. It was like putting a rock band together, basically, you wanted to get all the tonalities of each actor and character balanced together, so it was like

BEAST MODE

A spin-off from the Harry Potter series, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is filled with magical creatures. Here are but a few:

Thunderbird

Powerful wings that can generate storms, especially when faced with danger.



Niffler

It may be small and cute but don't get between the Niffler and a sparkly thing.



Demiguise

Not only is its silver hair striking, it's much coveted as it can be spun into an invisibility cloak.

creating four characters who could all bring something different to the table in slightly different ways."

Katherine Waterston, who can loosely be described as a love-interest for the easily-distracted Newt, admits the process was traumatic.

"It actually brings hot sweats back, just remembering our chemistry test. I feel this sort of PASD – Post Audition Stress Disorder! It's so nerve-racking, because you know the thing you're supposed to deliver, and you don't know if you will in that moment, and also you can't manufacture or fake it any way, so it's kind of not up to you, but we did find ourselves running around with wands in that moment."

"I don't think I would have gotten the job if Eddie hadn't also been a neurotic fiend, because it was a relief to not be the only nervous person in the room," adds the actress.

Of course, the film lives up to its title, *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*. The original script featuring 80+ such creatures, later whittled down to about a dozen, three of which are accidentally unleashed in New York. **S**

➔ *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is in cinemas on November 17.